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Gaza board membership becomes bone of contention

• During joint sitting of parliament, lawmakers question decision to join US-led initiative without taking House into confidence • Ahsan Iqbal defends move, calls it 'diplomatic win' • Three controversial bills passed despite opposition protest • Resolution adopted on Gul Plaza tragedy in Karachi

By Syed Irfan Raza

ISLAMABAD: Tempers boiled over in the joint sitting of parliament on Friday as opposition and treasury benches exchanged heated words over the government's decision to join US President Donald Trump's 'Board of Peace' on Gaza, while three controversial bills were pushed through amid loud protests from the opposition.

Meanwhile, a resolution was passed on Karachi's Gul Plaza tragedy, demanding full compensation for the victims and the strengthening of firefighting and other civic systems to avoid such mishaps in the future.

Speaking during the session, Leader of the Opposition in the Senate Raja Nasir Abbas said the government had joined the 'Board of Peace' without taking parliament into confidence. "The board will further add to the miseries of the people of Palestine," he added. "What [Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin] Netanyahu could not do [against Palestine] will start in the name of the Board of Peace."

JUI-F chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman also opposed the government's move to join the 'Board of Peace', saying it was done out of fear of US President Trump.

He said Trump was strengthening Israel against Islamic countries like Iran, adding that Tel Aviv had now stationed its forces near Taftan, the Pakistan-Iran border area.

Opposition senators decry 'election fraud, overreach': Page 3

However, Planning Minister Ahsan Iqbal defended the move, saying Pakistan's presence at the "centre stage", along with its brother Muslim countries, to contribute towards peace in Gaza was a "diplomatic win".

He began his speech by recalling Pakistan's nuclear tests in 1998. "We set an example of Pakistan's liberty and sovereignty when the then US president called five times. Pakistan was being pressured by the world, but we

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Imaan, Hadi remanded to jail after dramatic arrest

• Police intercept bar vehicle near Serena underpass • Lawyers claim force used as Imaan allegedly manhandled • Bar councils condemn arrests, warn of protest movement

By Malik Asad

ISLAMABAD: An anti-terrorism court on Thursday sent lawyer and rights activist Imaan Zainab Mazari-Hazir and her husband, Advocate Hadi Ali Chattha, to jail on judicial remand, hours after the couple was arrested and produced before the court under tight security.

The ATC remanded them to jail on judicial remand in a case relating to a protest outside the Islamabad High Court (IHC) and alleged manhandling of the Islamabad High Court Bar Association (IHCBA) president.

Strict security measures were enforced during the proceedings and entry to the courtroom was restricted. Lawyers and journalists were not allowed inside.

Call for solidarity with legal activists following their arrest, remand: Page 3

The case was heard by ATC Judge Abual Hasnat Muhammad Zulqarnain. Prior to their arrest, Ms Mazari and Mr Chattha had spent three nights at the IHCBA president's office as part of a protest, and their arrest prompted lawyers' bodies to announce a

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ABBOTTABAD: Rescue officials remove snow from their vehicle after heavy snowfall blanketed the Galiyat with a coat of white. According to the Met Office, more rain and snowfall is expected in various parts of the country from Sunday.—Dawn

US points its armada towards Persian Gulf

• Trump asserts close surveillance of Tehran; insists he doesn't want anything to happen • Iranian cleric threatens retaliation against US-linked investments • UN agency holds emergency session to address 'alarming violence' against protesters

WASHINGTON: President Donald Trump said a US "armada" was heading towards the Persian Gulf and that Washington was watching Iran closely, keeping the option of new military action open despite signalling that Tehran appeared interested in negotiations.

On his way back from the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, the president told reporters on Air Force One that the US was sending a "massive fleet" toward the region "just in case".

"I'd rather not see anything happen but we're watching them very closely," Trump said.

While the prospect of immediate American military action seemed to recede in recent days, with both sides insisting on giving diplomacy a chance, military tensions remain high.

Trump while addressing the WEF in Davos confirmed on Thursday the US attacked Iranian uranium enrichment sites last year to prevent Tehran from making a nuclear weapon, an ambition Iran denies. "Can't let that happen," Trump said. He added, "And Iran does want to talk, and we'll talk."

In a standoff marked by seesawing rhetoric, Iranian officials issued stern warnings regarding US manoeuvrers. An influential cleric warned on Friday that Tehran might target US-linked investments in retaliation for any attack.

Oil rises 3pc as US sends 'armada' to Iran: Page 9

War in Gaza weakened Arab states, emboldened Israel, says Vali Nasr: Page 12

"The one trillion dollars you have invested in the region is under the watch of our missiles," said Mohammad Javad Haj Ali Akbari, a prayer leader in Tehran.

Iranian military leadership also escalated its rhetoric. Gen Mohammad Pakpour, a commander in the Revolutionary Guard, warned Israel and the US "to avoid any miscalculations" and avoid a "painful

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Nine dead as snow blankets northern parts

• KKH, other major roads blocked • Murree sees 15 inches of snow • Quetta records coldest night at -13°C • More rain, snow expected from Sunday

By Zahiruddin, Jamil Nagri, Aamir Yasin and Saleem Shahid

CHITRAL/GILGIT/RAWALPINDI/QUETTA: At least nine members of a family were killed when a snow avalanche buried their house in Chitral on Friday, as heavy snowfall, avalanches and landslides brought life to a standstill across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Balochistan, Gilgit-Baltistan and Azad Kashmir, blocking roads, stranding travellers and disrupting electricity and relief operations amid freezing temperatures.

Hilly areas receive snow, entry of tourists banned in Murree: Page 4

The avalanche struck a house in Serigal village of the Damil area in the extreme south of the district on Friday

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Five killed in D.I. Khan suicide blast

DERA ISMAIL KHAN: At least five people, including a peace committee leader, were killed, while 10 others were injured in an explosion — said to be a suicide attack — during a wedding here on Friday night.

Police identified the deceased as peace committee leader Waheedullah Mehsud alias Jigri, Advocate Abdul Majeed Lagri, Shehzad, Waheed, and Inayatullah.

According to D.I. Khan District Police Officer (DPO) Sajjad Ahmed Sahibzada, the explosion occurred near Qureshi Morr during a wedding at the residence of a peace committee member.

"The explosion was a suicide blast," he told *Dawn*, confirming that the head of the bomber was found at the scene.

The attacker detonated himself inside a room, triggering a powerful blast that caused the roof to collapse.

The DPO said an emergency had been imposed at the District Headquarters Hospital.

In a statement, Khyber

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ON OTHER PAGES

Dhaka tiff with Delhi clouds Olympic bid

India hopes next month's T20 World Cup will bolster its credentials as a global sports host — and the country's Olympic ambitions — but preparations have been rocked by a diplomatic row with Bangladesh and accusations of political interference. Bangladesh have effectively been forced out after the ICC rejected a request to move their matches from India to co-hosts Sri Lanka. **Page 18**

Plus... Young World